AN OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST FROM ALBERT PELL'S BOOK.

The Reformer of the English Poor Law One of the Last of His Type—Pictures of Early Nineteenth Century Rural Life in England—An Old Library.

LONDON, Nov. 24.—Among the most interesting books published in London this year must be counted "The Autobiography of Albert Pell." This "fine old English gentleman," as he is well called in the introduction to his own story of his life, was one of the last of a fine type of manhood.

The most serious part of Mr. Pell's life was devoted to the reform of the English poor law and to the general uplifting and improvement of the condition, morally, socially and politically, of the English agricultural laborer. For seventeen years in the House of Commons and throughout a long life out of it he devoted himself to this cause with unflagging energy and dogged determination. A quotation from his epitaph in the church at Hazelbeach may well serve as an introduction to him: "Eldest son of Sir Albert Pell, Knt., and of Honble. Margaret Letitia Matilda, daughter and co-heir of the 12th Baron St. John of Bletsoe. Born March 12th, 1820, educated under Dr. Arnold, at Rugby, M. A. and LL. D. of the University of Cambridge, M. P. for South Leicestershire 1868-1885. Of long experience as a Guardian of the Poor in London and in the Country, he condemned Poor Law relief as inconsistent with real beneficence and adverse to the best interests of the poor. Honest in purpose, fearing no man, he served his generation by the will of God, and died April 7, 1907."

It would be impossible to read Albert Pell's story of his life without being interested in and instructed by his accounts of his work in connection with the poor law. But for the general reader perhaps his reminiscences of a day now long gone, of famous men and women, and his pictures of English country life will prove of greatest interest. Writing after he had passed his eighty-sixth birthday, with a mind and memory untouched by years, he could look back to a period which to those of a younger generation seems almost as strange and far away as the Middle Ages, yet there are men still living who can remember those picturesque times.

"My grandfather," he writes, "was living in the reign of George I. George III. died in the year of my birth. I was at my mother's breast when Thistlewood, the Cato street conspirator, was hanged, and more than a year old when Napoleon died at St. Helena.

"We lived at the edge of a great wood on the northern border of Middlesex, with no neighbors within a mile save some of doubtful character, so the family blunderbuss was fired at night about once a fortnight, to announce that the household was armed. * * * My mother when a girl used to come to London for the season from Bedfordshire on horseback with her sister. On these occasions they slept at Woburn Abbey in order to cross Finchley Common before dusk, travelling with two well armed mounted servants, one in front and one behind, as an escort. The plate, linen and toilettes were conveyed to town in one of the estate wagons."

One of the first well known men that Pell met as a small boy was Wilberforce, who used to stop with his father in the country. He remembers coming in to dessert, "or possibly earlier in the meal, as the tablecloth was still on the table. Wilberforce was not sitting square to the table, but had one elbow on it, and the other hand was crumbling some overdone toast and making a fearful mess." Among Pell's older friends was a Yorkshire doctor of whom and Wilberforce he tells the following story:

"When he was an infant in arms his nurse was swept by an election mob to the very foot of the York hustings at a famous contest for the county in which Wilberforce was one of the principal actors. With all the earnestness and vigor which distinguished him he was pressing his beneficent views on the abolition of slavery. Carried away by the depth of his convictions and enthusiastic inspiration he reached over the balcony and snatching the baby from the arms of its astonished nurse held it up over his head in the face of the people, exclaiming:

"'See this and hear my prophecy. Before this child dies there will not be a white man in the world owning a slave.'

"My friend survived the civil war in the United States and virtually Wilberforce's prophecy was fulfilled."

Here is a picture of English village life about 1831. The village was Pinner, near which was the Pells' country home, from the lawn of which in October, 1834, young Albert Pell saw the Houses of Parliament in flames.

"At the bottom of the village was a slow, muddy stream on the other side of which was the workhouse. Thither I was taken on many a Sunday morning by my indignant father, who immediately hastened through the hall to a door opening on to a walk that bordered the whole length of the building.

"Along this walk stretched for some yards an iron rod, fastened to the wall at either end. On this rod ran an iron ring, with a short chain and shackle. To this shackle the village idiot was fastened by his ankle, and so, passing from left [illegible] and right to left in the blazing sun [illegible] bitter wind, took his exercise and [illegible]ay his life. Placing me for a [illegible] in front of this exhibition, my fath[illegible]ery solemn tone said:

"'This so[illegible]thing must be altered. If it is not do[illegible] my lifetime, mind you, help to do it in yours.'" Pell in later days, in seventeen years work on the Metropolitan Asylums Board, did not forget.

At the age of 12 Pell went to Rugby School, of which the famous Dr. Arnold was then head master. Very interesting are his accounts of his early school days, but too discursive for treatment here. Notably good is a description of a drive to London in the royal mail cart when the Rugby boys fled home from cholera which had reached the neighborhood.

One of his school fellows was Hughes, the author of the immortal "Tom Brown's Schooldays." Pell says that Hughes's picture of life at Rugby was so complete that he has little or nothing to add to it; but here he does himself an injustice. His pages dealing with Rugby will be of deepest interest to any reader of "Tom Brown's Schooldays."

This is how "Pickwick" came to the boys of Rugby. "Boz was coming into repute. In a short time the fame of a story by Boz reached Rugby, and I heard people talking of 'Pickwick,' which was then coming out in monthly numbers. There was a boy in 'our house,' to whom his father sent the current numbers of 'The Pickwick Papers' fresh from the press. This was treasure trove in which we resolved that all should be partners.

"There was a two horse coach, the Pig and Whistle. The day on which the new number of 'Pickwick' would be on the road was ascertained, its arrival was watched, and on the precious print being handed to its owner he was accompanied by an eager escort up the town and along the road to 'our house' and so into the hall. There 'Pickwick' was torn up into as many sheets as the number consisted of.

"The first page, together with the illustrations, was handed, with just consideration, to its owner. As soon as the first page had been read it was passed on to a senior boy, who commenced his study of it, while the second page was passed to the original proprietor; and so in the course of twenty minutes quite a group of boys were all devouring 'Pickwick' piecemeal, in deep silence, broken every now and then by bursts of laughter. I was small and thus had my patience sorely tried in waiting my turn, which sometimes did not come till a night had passed away."

At the age of 18 Pell entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Football was then unknown at Cambridge. Pell introduced the game there.

"Rugby," he writes, "was famous for the game, and when I left it was considered that the school field had lost a rather distinguished player. I loved the rough game as much as or more than cricket and missed its excitement and conflict sadly. It seemed that there were other outcasts like myself. Some too heavy to hunt or row, some too poor, some who, not having been at public schools, were fretting life away in constitutionals. An inspiration reached me that there was here an opportunity for getting up football.

"It was said that such a proposal could not be entertained among men; boys might hack each other's shins and cling like leopards to the necks of their opponents without offence, but not so university men." Pell, however, got some men together and established football at Cambridge.

After Cambridge Pell took a farm in the Harrow Vale, twelve miles from London. This seems a strange picture of farming, only twelve miles from London upon ground now well built over, to be written by a man who died last year.

"The staple product was hay for the London market, but there were about twelve acres of impervious clay under the plough, producing a modest yield of the finest wheat in the kingdom for flour. The ploughing was done by a wooden plough, with wooden breast, drawn by three horses at length. The seed was sown broadcast. Threshing was done by the flail. The dressing of the grain was much as it had been in Saxon times. * * *

"The whole operation was tedious and expensive. I think the threshing alone cost five shillings a quarter of eight bushels, and probably the dressing up eighteenpence more. The machinery or implements employed might have been bought for forty or fifty shillings.

"The thresher made his own flail. Time was kept and marked in a primitive way. A crack in the barn doors when these were set back admitted a beam of sunlight on the jamb; across this notches were cut with a knife at different distances. When the full ray reached one mark it was luncheon time; another illumination on a lower mark indicated dinner time."

From this time on Pell became an enthusiastic and scientific farmer. He took in hand the family estate at Wilburton in Cambridgeshire, and his accounts of the primitive state of things in the Fens not long after he left Cambridge University are deeply interesting. In reading these pages, and indeed throughout the volume, one gets pictures of old time English country life which make one wonder how in the comparatively short space of less than seventy years nearly every trace of that life can have disappeared. The English country of Pell's young days seems little removed from the days of "Merrie England."

Here is a picture of haymaking on his farm in the Harrow Vale, twelve miles from London, which shows Pell, who makes no pretence to fine writing, at his best, except perhaps in the passages where he describes the mail coach drives of his boyhood:

"The hay was made in a more careful and studied fashion than nowadays. No machines rattled in the meadows, nor was mechanical assistance called in at the building of the rick. At first not even a hand drag was in use.

"Early, very early in the morning, while the dew wetted the grass, the strong, enduring mower entered the field. He took a sup of ale from his wooden bottle and then charmed the still, misty air with the music of the whetstone on his scythe. The patient team rested meanwhile and gathered flesh and strength undisturbed against the day of the hay cart. No such rest now; out of the monotonous cutter they are yoked into the horse rake, out of the horse rake into the cart shafts.

"Then, with their throats moistened and their scythes whetted, the leading men of the gang swept down with a swish the first swaths. The next followed, and so on in diagonal procession, two, three, four, in their white shirts, sleeves turned up and straps buckled around their middles to hold their fustian breeches in position. Their ample calves swelled the home made stockings, and the whole was supported in patriarchal hobnail laced boots.

"This powerful and somewhat solemn procession, with legs apart, was carried irresistibly forward till the edge was taken off the blade and a halt was called for whetting. Then up went the glittering blades in the air, a lock of grass was picked from the ground to wipe them, back into the loins went the hand to withdraw the whetstone from the leather sheath. Then again the music of the scythe at the far end of the field announced the sad fall of buttercups, ox-eyed daisies, lady's smocks and meadow grasses.

"Meanwhile the sun rolled up on the horizon or over the wood, higher and higher, and the dazzling light and summer heat cleared away the moist dew. The 'cut' became dry and harsh, the whetstones and the bottles came in more frequent request and anxious glances were directed toward the gate or stile in the hedge. At last, but still due to time, the wife or the child appeared with basket and breakfast or 'nunch,' and all adjourned to the shade of the hedgerow.

"Very few words were spoken, but the clasp knives came out of the pockets and were soon at work on cold bacon, bread and onions. That over, the empty basket went back to the cottages; the short pipe and tobacco closed the meal. Then an hour's more work, and then before noon, during the hottest hours of the day, sleep and snores for two if not three hours, and then work, hard work again, well into the shades of evening.

"Before this, however, and while the mowers slept, a troop of noisy, chattering haymakers with straw bonnets and aprons arrived in the field and the making of the hay commenced with a thorough and complete breaking up of the swaths. Each woman had her own rake and fork, heavier than those in use now (for the light steel American implements had not yet appeared and, after all, the hand rake was the tool that best served the purpose of making good hay)."

Scattered throughout the pages are a number of amusing stories of country and parliamentary life. Here is a story from a Cambridgeshire farm:

"In the early summer the sheep were washed in the river; a few weeks later those bipeds who had had the call received their Baptist dipping at the same convenient spot. This was an important event of which due notice was given. On one occasion the engineer of a large fen pumping engine lower down stream was observed to be engaged in carrying a supply of water indoors. On being asked the meaning of this very singular operation he said with a serious face:

"'There's to be a dipping to-morrow and my missis don't intend to drink all their sins as may drift down here.'"

Mr. Pell was a great drinker of milk, a famous physician having once told him that the life of a man who could drink milk was worth ten years more than that of a man who could not. A glass of milk, however, once lost him a vote in a Parliamentary election.

Calling on a small farmer to ask him for his vote, he interrupted the man at milking. Leaving his work the farmer came into the house and greeted Mr. Pell with a violent handshake and the boisterous inquiry, "What will you have to drink?"

Mr. Pell said: "Mr. Smith, I am much obliged to you for giving me the choice. As I have no doubt you brought the pail into the house, I should like above everything, except the promise of your vote, a mug of milk." "Oh!" he exclaimed, "You are very welcome, but I'm damned if I vote for a man who drinks milk.'"

But though a believer in milk as a beverage, Mr. Pell, as was only fitting for an old fashioned Tory country gentleman, knew and appreciated the beauties of port.

"Port wine," he says, "is the only wine worth drinking for drinking's sake, not sweet or insipid, but real old (say 30 years), of a good vintage, not to be gulped down, but to be dwelt upon and held on the palate a while before it is swallowed. Champagne is good when one is fagged out. The first glass then is divine; a second may be allowed; the third is just guzzling.

"In grouse shooting behind setters I carried nothing with me but a morsel of oatcake and a modicum of old whiskey which I sipped undiluted. Anything more, I fancied, spoiled my shooting.

"When walking in Switzerland or over the lovely North Country fells and hills I took an orange in my knapsack. This I rolled and pummelled till it was soft inside, then making a small hole through the peel I dropped in some best brandy and sucked it, then poured in more of the spirit and had another taste, and so on till all the juice was gone. If the day was hot I put my orange in a mountain spring to ice it or in the snow if there was any handy."

An interesting passage gives a good idea of how literary treasures of almost priceless value have been lost and found in old English mansions. Sir Charles Isham, an old school fellow of Pell's, determined to have his library catalogued.

"It contained," says Pell, "the usual collection of British and other classics in folios and quartos of very respectable dates—no modern books from Sir Walter Scott downward, and I never saw a single volume from those shelves in the hands of any reader. The representative of a London firm was engaged off and on for some years at the work.

"At last it was completed, and Mr. Edmunds took his seat at the luncheon table before leaving for London. As there were some minutes to spare afterward, Lady Isham said to him:

"'Oh, Mr. Edmunds, there are upstairs in an attic in a chest of drawers some old books—waste paper, in fact; perhaps you would just have a look at them.'

"Upstairs Mr. Edmunds went and in about ten minutes came down with a small book or booklet bound in old limp vellum, with leather strings instead of a clasp to keep its pages loose. Holding it up he said:

"'This seems a curiosity. May I take it to London?'

"In a few days came a note from his employers offering Sir Charles £7 for this small copy of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and 'The Passionate Pilgrim.' But Sir Charles said he did not want to sell books. So this one was returned, and shortly afterward Mr. Edmunds paid another visit to examine thoroughly the other contents of the attic. Then there were revelations.

"The 'Venus and Adonis' was the edition of 1599, perfect in every respect, and so far unique. In the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, I have seen another copy of the same date, but imperfect. Sir Charles at last was persuaded to sell some of the 'attic' treasures, and this little volume made £2,000.

"Among other little volumes bound up in the same way were Decker's poems and others of a 'free' character. There were playbills of Shakespearian time, and several copies of his spurious plays. Several volumes were unique. The history of their scarceness is that on account of their licentious tone all these publications had been condemned under an episcopal order to be brought in and burned.

"The Isham of the day, however, who had seen a good deal of the world, retained his copies, putting them out of sight for safety, and there they slept in the attic of Lamport Hall, not wholly undisturbed, for there was a Kettering bookseller who yearly bought up waste paper for grocers' packages, and in his spring rounds he was sent upstairs to bring down and pay for what he wanted. It was the small size of the sheets of 'Venus and Adonis' and other rarities that saved them, for they were not large enough to 'do up' a pound of butter, soap or sugar."

Mr. Pell was known to favor legislation obliging children to perform duties toward their parents, which but for the encouragement given them by the poor law of that time they would never have thought of neglecting. On one occasion Pell was asked on the hustings by a heckler whether he was the man who in his place in Parliament had made the law obliging poor men to maintain their parents.

"No!" rapped out Mr. Pell in reply, "that is an older law. It was written by God Almighty on two tablets of stone and brought down by Moses from Mount Sinai, and as far as I can make out, Thomas, it's the stone and not the law that has got into your heart." The abashed heckler got his answer, and for many a long day was known as Stony Hearted Thomas.

Perhaps we may add the following saying of Pell's about Abraham Lincoln, his favorite hero:

"I have often thought how effectively, if Moses had been out of the way, Lincoln could have taken his people through the long trail in the wilderness to the Promised Land. No other character in history that I can recall would have been equal to the business."

STEEL CUT BY AIR.

Experiment to Show the Speed With Which the Work Can Be Done.

From the Chicago Tribune.

"Diamond cut diamond," but steel is cut with air. The new and ingenious method of rapidly cutting through iron or steel plate is based upon the fact that when iron at a high temperature is acted upon by a fine jet of oxygen the resulting iron oxide is more fusible than the iron itself and passing away exposes a fresh surface of the metal to the attack of the gas so that a cut is produced along the line of action.

In the early attempts to utilize this method in practice the metal was first heated to the required temperature in an oxyhydrogen flame and then subjected to the action of the oxygen jet.

Now, however, the heating and oxidation are done at the same time and the resulting cut is much sharper.

In one form of apparatus used for this process the metal is heated by means of an oxy-acetylene flame from the centre of which issues a jet of oxygen. In illustration of the speed of the new process L. Guillet in ten minutes cut in two an armor plate 6¼ inches thick and 2½ feet in length. Manholes were cut in plates ¾ to 1¼ inches thick in four to five minutes.

In parallel experiments upon the same piece of metal a groove ⅓ to 2½ inches deep was cut by the oxygen process in seven minutes, whereas with a pneumatic chisel a groove of about the same length but only a quarter as deep took an hour to cut. The new method has also given satisfactory results in the rapid removal of the heads of rivets where plating has to be separated, only a few seconds' treatment being needed for fusing off the head of a rivet ¾ inch thick.

With regard to the effect of the oxygen upon the metal adjoining the cut experiments have shown that the depreciation is but slight.

A SHAW PLAY SET TO MUSIC

"ARMS AND THE MAN" MADE INTO A COMIC OPERA.

New Operetta by Oscar Strauss, Composer of "The Waltz Dream," Heard in Vienna—Some of the Shavian Flavor Eliminated, but the Music Pleasing.

VIENNA, Nov. 15.—When Bernard Shaw some fourteen years ago wrote the first of his so-called "peasant plays" for the New Theatre in London he certainly never dreamed that it would at some future day be used for the libretto of a comic opera. And yet the omnivorous Vienna librettist, in search of material from the dramatic literature of all climes and all ages, has not hesitated to tread where English adapters have as yet not ventured to set foot.

Herr Rudolf Bernauer and Herr Leopold Jacobson have hit upon "Arms and the Man" and fashioned therefrom a book which they have named "The Brave Soldier" ("Der Tapfere Soldat"), securing the valuable cooperation as composer of Herr Oscar Strauss, who ever since the success of his "Waltz Dream" has stood in the very foremost rank of modern Vienna musicians. Original serious compositions seldom nowadays see the light of day in the Austrian capital. Plays that have more than a passing vogue are far more likely to be introduced in Berlin than here. It is only in the field of comic opera that Vienna can claim to be more productive than any other capital on the Continent.

To be sure, among the endless succession of more or less valueless works that appear from season to season marketable articles such as a "Merry Widow" or "Waltz Dream" or even "Dollar Princess" were few and far between. But for each new work when it is brought out the hope exists that it may prove a record breaker, and especially, as in the present instance, if it has issued from the pen of either of the two composers whose fame has travelled to all parts of the civilized world.

That Oscar Strauss's "Brave Soldier" has been looked forward to even outside of Vienna with no little curiosity goes without saying, so that its first performance last evening attracted not only the customary Austrian contingent but also a veritable congress of managers from all parts of Europe. Their journey hither will fortunately not have proved in vain, for though it would be idle at this early stage to speculate upon the precise commercial value of "The Brave Soldier" it may at the outset be stated that the new work created an indisputably favorable impression.

Herr Oscar Strauss has in this his latest composition fairly surpassed himself, his score having all the distinguishing characteristics of his former work—charm, humor, distinction and individuality. "Arms and the Man," though very much more valuable as a play than "The Brave Soldier" is as a libretto, adapts itself exceedingly well with certain modifications in which, alas! a good bit of the Shavian flavor is lost to the purposes of comic opera, and if the result is not distinctly the best possible it is at least superior to the average staple article to which the complacent public here and elsewhere is accustomed.

That the first act of "Arms and the Man" with its dramatic situations and varied incidents would fit well into the plan of a comic opera could have been foretold by any one conversant with the requirements of the stage. The second and third, on the other hand, seemed to defy adaptation; and yet with but slight alterations and only a ruthless sacrifice of G. B. S.'s most characteristic dialogue a fairly satisfactory result has been achieved.

Of course, whatever the original contained that could in any way hurt the feelings of the inhabitants of the Balkan States had at this critical time of threatening political horizons to be carefully eliminated, after which all the quaint bits of humor, the curious vivisection of human weakness that are so droll, if one is only inclined to look on life from the author's special coign of vantage, had also to be disposed of; and only the more drastic bits of fooling, such as the strictures on the "morbid cleanliness" of Englishmen, to mention but a single instance, or the burlesque inventory of *Bluntschli's* worldly possessions, have been retained. The man servant, Nicola, has been cut out; *Loucka*, the maid, has become a "relative of the Major," while the delightful whimsicality of her position with regard to the family and to *Sergius*, whom she finally marries, is sacrificed to the needs of the occasion.

The second act is ushered in by the return of the victorious Bulgarian troops on the very day fixed for the heroine's wedding, which, according to good old operatic precedent, is frustrated by the discovery that her affections have been bestowed on the "chocolate cream soldier." The librettists here follow Shaw, but in a far less unconventional way than he would probably approve of.

The last act is a mere shadow of its model, it hardly does more than bring the two couples together and at the same time the operetta to an end. A few of the incidents that Shaw has merely indicated have been elaborated so as to form pivots on which the action subsequently hinges, but for the most part the librettists' task has consisted principally in leaving a trifling percentage of the play and adding but little of their own invention save some lyrics that are good enough to have inspired Herr Strauss to some of his most delightful music.

A great charm of "The Merry Widow" was in the Slavic themes that Lehar had deftly interwoven into his score. Oscar Strauss has now followed on the same line, and while laying as heretofore the greatest stress on the distinctively Viennese rhythms and dance forms he has made use of melodic material that has pronounced local coloring and is yet of a kind to pass muster before any nationality with an ear for pleasing music.

His waltz strains, as in all the comic operas since those of his geat namesake, Johann Strauss, possess a charm of sentimentality and melodiousness that are captivating; while in addition to the gift of invention he has another, which has been denied to nearly all his colleagues—a sense of musical humor, which finds expression in apt bits of orchestration of which even an Offenbach would have no cause to be ashamed. Indeed, if any one particular characteristic of the score had to be singled out it would be in the evident merry spirit and wholesome enjoyment with which the entire music was written.

In works of this class one is not apt to look for special treasures in orchestration, and though no revolutionary effects have been sought after by Oscar Strauss the whole operetta has been instrumented with such discretion and nice feeling that one recognizes a master hand.

The first act counts six, the second seven separate musical numbers, of which it is no exaggeration to say that not one of them is of that all too ordinary slipshod quality whose marked rhythm and facile harmonization are made to serve as stop gaps between more *ad captandum* pieces. The third act has but three numbers, and of them only one, a letter song for the soprano, deserves special mention. It has come to be an established law of criticism in judging Viennese operettas to gauge their merits by the first and second acts. If these are sufficient they are supposed to cover a multitude of sins—though they are only of omission—in the concluding act. Judged by this standard "The Brave Soldier" will not be found wanting.

It would not be a Viennese operetta if it lacked as chief number the swing of a captivating waltz, and "The Brave Soldier" has been provided therewith as generously as the most exacting taste for such an article of export can demand. It comes in the first act from the lips of the heroine in the shape of an apostrophe to the photograph of her soldier lover ("Come, hero of my dreams") and is then most cleverly repeated in the brilliant finale to Act II. But such is its clear suggestiveness that it had not to wait for its repetition and its more effective subsequent setting to be acclaimed enthusiastically by the first night's audience as the waltz of the season. It seems fairly bewildering to attempt roughly to calculate how many thousands of feet and hands will keep time during the approaching winter to its swaying measures.

Then too there are the polkas, the prettiest perhaps that of the "Chocolate Cream Soldier" which appears in the guise of a duet in the first act—and the marches that cover all the musical ground from the Balkan States to the capital on the beautiful blue Danube. A very pretty ending is made to the first act by a cradle song for the three women's voices, while *Bluntschli*, overcome by fatigue, falls peacefully asleep.

The second act brings among other pleasing numbers a quintet that is particularly fetching and a song for *Bumerli*, as "The Brave Soldier" is called, that with its cowbells and suggestions of Swiss *ranz des vaches* furnishes an amusing bit of apposite coloring which even a more serious composer like Giordano did not disdain in "Fedora."

A polka mazurka in the shape of a dance duet, a particularly clever sextet and above all the exhilarating finale complete a list of such portions of the score as not alone found the most favor on the first night but also are most likely to become familiar by frequent repetition. They bear on their face the mark of popularity.

The Theater au der Wien, the scene of so many first productions of subsequent international comic opera successes, has made a special effort to bring out Oscar Strauss's work in a manner worthy of so important an occasion. Mounting on the comic opera stage in Vienna never means the lavish expenditure familiar to New York or London audiences, and in "The Brave Soldier" there was nothing calculated to dazzle the eye. But the mise en scéne was in every way sufficient, and the costumes as well as the uniforms were picturesque and becoming.

Two newcomers replaced the favorites of former years—the *Widow* and *Prince Danilo*—and both the lady, Fräulein Grete Holm, as well as the gentleman, Herr Gustav Werner, avoided the besetting sin of their colleagues here, well established in the favor of the public—they did not unduly emphasize their vocal or histrionic efforts.

For the tenor rôle of *Sergius* the indestructible Herr Streitmann had been chosen, who sang in America with Lillian Russell nearly a quarter of a century ago. Time has not mellowed his throaty tones, but he still appears here with a certain show of justification, and in spite of his venerable juvenility can still boast, as in his palmy days, a faithful following. The Viennese are pleased now and then to prove themselves conservative.

Though "Arms and the Man" of all Shaw's plays is the one that in its German form has perhaps least taken hold of the public, what is to be found of it in the libretto of "The Brave Soldier" is sure to appeal pleasantly to theatregoers here. As for Oscar Strauss's music, that cannot fail to charm whenever and wherever it will be heard. It is unnecessary to be a prophet to foresee a prosperous career for the new work, whether in the original or in a translated form. English speaking audiences will assuredly be curious to see how Bernard Shaw fits into the frame of comic opera and will probably be glad to acknowledge that the musical illustration of Oscar Strauss deserves to be commended.

Whether in giving us "The Brave Soldier" he has bestowed on his many admirers a second "Waltz Dream" is a question it would be hazardous, even in face of a verdict as unequivocal as yesterday evening's, to decide. "*Non bis in idem*" is a pretty safe motto for all things connected with the stage, and yet there are already to-day plenty of people ready to admit that nothing short of a triumphal career should be in store for so courageously attractive a work as "The Brave Soldier." W. VON SACHS.

SULLIVAN TALKS OF BOXING.

John L. Says the Science Has Not Improved in Recent Years.

John L. Sullivan is always ready to talk of the game which made him famous. The big fellow is touring the West, and the other day somebody asked him whether he thought that boxing had improved. Said Sullivan:

"Boxing has not improved as an art in years, though there were not as many boxers fifteen years ago as now. It is an evident fact that when I took up boxing I put it on the plane that it now maintains. I put it in shape so that they could make some money out of it—both the managers and the fighters. Boxing has gone ahead in this country, but has deteriorated in England. They have not had a real champion, heavyweight or lightweight, in England in a long time. Mitchell was the last champion they had over there. Jem Mace, like myself, was champion both in this country and in England in his day. He is still alive, which goes to show that boxers, or fighters if you prefer the term, live to a good old age. Mace is 74 years of age and hearty.

"On what line was the boxing different fifteen years ago? More foot racing? The difference in the style of fighting? Well, in boxing fifteen years ago they used to fight for very small prizes. The boxing prize was $1,000 for an international championship, or £200 in English money. Sayers and Heenan fought in 1860 on the seventh day of April, at Farnsborough, for $1,000 a side for the international championship of the world. Spectators broke into the ring and the referee declared it no contest.

"Boxing has not improved any! The lightweight championship of twenty years ago was fought for by such men as Billy Edwards, Arthur Chambers, Tim Collins, Mullins and Patsy Sheppard. Now they could fight all the lightweights we have to-day and beat them easily. It seems to-day that the lightweights have the honors in fighting. More lightweight fights have been put in the ring for the last four years than any other class.

"A great many people imagine or think that if a man is a boxer or fighter he has got to be a tough or an ugly mug, but such is not the case. A boxer or a fighter can be as much of a gentleman as the banker, broker, physician or merchant.

"Now I have always advocated boxing as a clean, manly, healthy exercise; more so than football, wrestling or race riding. There is never a time that a jockey mounts a horse in a running race that he doesn't take his life in his hands. There have been fewer fatalities in the prize ring than among football players and jockeys. Statistics will prove this. In 1906 from the first of October to the first of December during the football season nineteen young men were killed, and nobody knows how many were injured for life.

"Every young man from 15 to 21 years of age should be taught the manly art of self-defence in order to protect himself against any rough or tough who might undertake to hold him up on the highway. Boxing develops not only physical endurance but also manly instincts. It is not a brutal game and should be encouraged all over the United States. Contests with padded gloves are not prizefights such as were held with bare knuckles under the old London rules."

THREE SCOTCH PAINTERS.

Three New Men Who Are Beginning to Make a Stir in London.

LONDON, Nov. 28.—Among the younger generation of painters is a group of three men, J. D. Fergusson, S. J. Peploe and Joseph Simpson, whose fame seems sure to spread beyond their own country. In their native town of Edinburgh great things were predicted for them which the criticism of their work, now on exhibition in London, goes far to justify. That this criticism has been largely censure proves that their work is exceptionally unlike most of that which surrounds it, at any rate in such time honored exhibitions as the Royal Society of British Artists.

Certain galleries have certain traditions, and though for a time the Society of British Artists was entirely transformed by the presidency of Whistler, yet his reign was brief, and the exhibitions of to-day differ little from those that preceded the advent of that great individualist.

Joseph Simpson at present is best known by his process portraits—woodcuts printed in black and colored by himself. At the above named gallery hangs his portrait of King Edward, of which his Majesty has bought the original drawing. It is an excellent likeness of the King as he may be seen driving through the streets, flower in buttonhole, cigar in hand and the pleasant smile with which he invariably greets his subjects.

Mr. Simpson is not quite so much at ease in his painting in oils; his portrait of Major Raymond Smythies is a trifle too cold in color to be quite pleasing, but "The Toby Jug," though having somewhat the same defect, is otherwise excellent, the technique is good and the composition happy. The quaint old man who forms the jug sits squarely on the Union Jack, while in the background is a suggestion in a mirror of the artist himself at work. Among so much that is commonplace this fresh little picture seems out of place; it would be more at home at the Baillie Gallery, where Mr. Fergusson and Mr. Peploe are showing some of their work.

John Baillie, who has now moved his gallery to Bruton street, is not afraid of championing men little known, though doing so may not be immediately remunerative. Three years ago he first gave Mr. Fergusson a show, and he has again this season devoted a whole room to that artist's work, some forty pictures in all. Mr. Fergusson's talent is versatile. With equal ease he paints the portrait of a man laughing, a group of figures outside a café at night or a boat lying alongside a row of houses on the bank of the Thames in the twilight.

His strength lies in his economy of means; he makes every brush mark tell, he suppresses all needless detail and seldom uses the fulness of his palate either in the high lights or shadows. Thus in the last named picture the lighted lamps on the boat though low in tone tell brightly against the sky and houses still luminous with the last rays of evening, and this in a canvas covering a few square inches, which is naturally more difficult than on a larger scale.

It is Mr. Fergusson's small sketches, impressions of Peebles, Aberdour, Tangiers and Paris, which appeal most readily to the public; his portraits are still so frank and direct as to be almost brutal. But they show a great advance on "The Man With the Geranium," shown a year or two ago. That picture was almost universally misunderstood. The deliberate ugliness of it was taken as merely an attempt by the artist to be different from other people, merely to make a sensation. It is true that three flat tones, pink for the face, drab for the background and black for the coat, with a splash of vermillion rather out of key for the geranium buttonhole, do not make for beauty; but any man who has something new to say cannot in the beginning say it with the ease and fluency of another who is simply repeating what has been said many times before.

Mr. Peploe's principal contribution to the Baillie Gallery is a still life, of which the silvery gray scheme of coffee pot, cups and black fan is enhanced by the red and gold of the apples lying on the white tablecloth. Like Mr. Fergusson, he paints with full brush of rich paint, indicating essentials with suave and flowing lines.

BACK TO THE FUR STORE.

How a French Huissier Outwitted a Shrewd Singer.

In theatrical circles, writes the Paris correspondent of the *Gentlewoman*, everybody is making merry over a story that happened to a music hall diva who is oftener seen at the races and at first nights than on the boards of her hall.

Some time ago she had bought a magnificent sable cloak worth about $3,000. When, however, the moment of payment arrived she was unable to settle, whereupon the furrier asked her to return the cloak.

This she refused to do, whereupon the indignant furrier sent her a huissier to bring her to bay. A huissier is a process server, whose legal functions consist in extracting money from recalcitrant debtors, or if possible, seize their goods.

When the man of the law called the lady received him, but she had taken the precaution of wrapping herself up in the cloak, well knowing that, according to law, garments may not be seized "on the body of the owner." The huissier withdrew, baffled, but brooding vengeance. That he, the experienced bailiff, should have been worsted by a woman was more than he could stand.

So he asked one of his friends to write to the diva, asking her to meet him at a fashionable restaurant, and the signature was that of a well known millionare financier. The lady kept the appointment. She again wore her sable cape, but committed the imprudence of handing it to the waiter who was to conduct her to the pseudo financier.

At that moment the huissier appeared and attached the cloak, which, after a few legal formalities, will now return to the furrier.

End of a Bear Terror.

From the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

A big bear that for years past has roamed the Mashel Mountain country and has been variously named "Wandering Jerry," "Old Alibi" and "Big Foot" was killed by Tall Moore, living at Alder. Moore was out hunting in the Mashel Mountain and found the trail of "Big Foot" and cautiously followed it. It was a case of still hunting pure and simple. Noiselessly creeping forward through the brush on the big animal's trail, which was easily followed owing to his having torn the bark off logs and opened rotten stumps after insects, Moore suddenly heard the bear foraging. The wind became favorable, he crept ahead until he saw the animal, and in a twinkling had put an end to its existence with his repeating rifle.

The bear was known and feared by nearly all the residents of the Mashel region. It was an incessant traveller and so got the name of "Wandering Jerry." From the same reason it got the sobriquet of "Old Alibi," as he could never be found where last reported. Its paws were immense, leading to the name "Big Foot."

RUNNING TRAINS BY PHONE

HUMAN VOICE SUPPLANTING THE TELEGRAPH KEY.

Thousands of Miles of Railroads Now Operated by Telephone—It Has Succeeded Where Other Systems Have Failed—Precautions Against Errors.

It is as easy to run trains by telephone as to call up a friend and invite him to dinner. The men who run the great railroads of the country are finding this out, with the result that many thousands of miles of railroad are now being conducted almost exclusively by telephone. Not long ago the superintendent of telegraph of a great Western railroad explained why the Morse instrument is giving way to the human voice:

"The use of the telephone is so rapid in every way and so much more flexible than the telegraph that by it the despatcher is enabled to get far more detailed information about exactly what each train is doing. Even when occasion requires he can talk directly with the conductor or engineer. He is thus brought so much nearer the actual details of train movement on the line.

"It is far more easy to train telephone operators than to secure telegraphers. There is hardly a town anywhere on the line where there are not young fellows who are more or less familiar with railroad work, who with very little training would be perfectly competent to do the work of telephone operators. There is much to be gained by making use of men in their own home towns. Our telegraph service was at its best when this condition existed to some extent, and discipline lessened in proportion as we have had to import telegraph talent."

While railroading by telephone seems like an innovation, it was really put into serious use thirteen years ago. It was then adopted by the Terminal Association at St. Louis, which in 1895 erected a new Union station with twenty-odd tracks running north and south, all of which had to be available for trains running east and west. To complicate matters all trains had to back in, making it necessary to focus all the tracks in the station at one point, from which a number of tracks curved east and west to meet the main lines.

This arrangement required a complex system of switch movements to permit a train coming from the east or west to be switched to any of the station tracks. The handling of heavy traffic offered many opportunities for mistakes and delays in the passage of trains. The telephone was not adopted until several other plans had failed, and then this scheme, which is still in operation, was tried.

The man who directs the trains is stationed in an interlocking switch tower just beyond the crossover. From his desk he can see all the tracks entering the station, and also all the East and West main lines. He is connected with telephone lines extending along the main lines for several miles in either direction and receives over these wires reports of the movement of trains as they enter or leave the yards.

These reports are made by switchmen stationed at various points who control the switches on the main line tracks. By giving them instructions the train director can shift the outgoing or incoming trains at will before they have reached or after they have left the terminal.

The train director is able to clear the station tracks for incoming trains in sufficient time to permit them to enter without delay. He is connected with the station master's office, so that the station master can be notified of the arrival of trains when they are still some distance away and shift the station force to take care of them.

The station master can stop the movement of a train even after it has started, as the train director can set the necessary stop signals before the train has left his control. By having the movement of all trains and switches in this terminal under the control of the train director over 300 trains a day are handled.

When the system of despatching trains by telegraph goes out there will be an end to an institution that was started in 1850. The use of the telephone for this purpose has been objected to on the ground that it is not as accurate as the telegraph owing to the similarity of sounds of different words, letters and figures. The adoption of the telephone at this time is indication that this trouble has been overcome.

One road that has been using the telephone for years is the Lake Erie, Alliance and Wheeling, which has nearly a hundred miles of single track road. The line handles much coal traffic and its schedule covers thirty trains each way a day. There are twenty-four telephone stations along the line at the various stations where the agents or train crews receive their orders.

On the division of the Pennsylvania lines between Columbia, Pa., and Parkersburg, Pa., a distance of thirty-eight miles, the trains have been operated by telephone supplemented by block signals since 1906. This division handles ninety-five trains of 4,800 cars daily, but the arrangement differs from that on the Lake Erie, Alliance and Wheeling.

At each terminal of the division and at three intermediate points there are small switchboards to which are connected three classes of telephone circuits. One of these, called the director's wire, is a through circuit connected with each of the five switchboards. Another circuit, known as the long distance emergency wire, connects the switchboard at each end station with the board in the centre of the division only. The switchboards are also connected with lines running from some twenty-five stations at various points long the track, these lines being known as block wires.

The train director can get in touch with the operators at the various switchboards and through them be connected with the telephone stations on the block wires in either direction, and thus get in direct communication with the crews.

In receiving orders by telephone conductors and engineers are both required to go to the telephone, one to receive the order and the other to write it down as repeated by the first. After it has been received the man who writes it from the other's repetition must repeat it back, while the man who received it must underline each word as it is repeated, in this way giving a check on the order and insuring a correct understanding.

The New York Central has had a line in operation between Albany and Fonda, a distance of forty miles, since October, 1907, and it has never been necessary to resort to the telegraph service in this time, even with the telephone circuit in trouble. Special signalling devices are used on this line which permit the despatcher at Albany to call one station without calling the other, or while talking to one he may call another without interrupting the conversation.

In case of accident or unusual delay the system enables the superintendent of the division to talk with the man on the ground and issue immediate orders. The telephone circuit is also found to work well under weather conditions which interfere with the operation of the telegraph circuit.

Giving the Pedestrian a Chance.

From the Queen.

The street traffic of Paris has become so dangerous since the introduction of motor cars that underground passages are being made at several places where accidents have happened, notably in the Avenue des Champs Elysées and the Place de la Concorde.